

REMARKS

1. Claims 1 and 37 were rejected on the basis of the lack of novelty (35 USC 102) with reference to Laiko et al. (5,965,884). We cannot agree with the examiner as neither Laiko et al. nor any other source known to the applicant discloses or teaches an apparatus for sample analysis wherein: 1) the samples are handled under atmospheric conditions in an unexposed position and are supported by sample plates installed in sample-plate carriers that function protective carriers/ satellites which are not left inside the mass spectrometer as in the prior-art apparatus but used only for holding, storing, and transporting the sample plates between the mass spectrometer and the storage device; 2) the ionization chamber of the apparatus of the invention is divisible and consists of a part that is stationary, e.g., fixed to the mass spectrometer and a moveable part that is separable from the mass spectrometer and can be moved away therefrom for gripping, handling, and transporting the carriers with sample plates between the storage device and mass spectrometer.

2. Claims 2-8, 15-25, 35, and 38-40 were rejected on the basis of obviousness (35 USC 103) with reference to Laikos et al. in view of M.V. Vestal (5,498,545). May we not to agree with the Examiner that it is obvious 1) to handle the samples under the atmospheric conditions without risk of contamination. Because of the risk of contamination, M.V. Vestal is handling his sample carriers with samples in vacuum. Employment of moveable mechanisms in vacuum requires the use of complicated sealing devices, additional vacuum pumps, etc. It is also not obvious to use an ionization chamber that is divisible and consists of a part that is permanently connected to the mass spectrometer during its operation and a moveable part that is separable from the mass spectrometer and can be moved away therefrom for gripping, handling, and transporting the carriers with sample plates between the storage device and mass spectrometer.

The arguments given above with regard to the apparatus, are also applicable to the claim methods. therefore, the applicant kindly ask to reconsider the rejection of method claims as well.

3. We appreciate the Examiner's note about the allowable mater and we redrafted the objected claims into an independent form with inclusion of all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

CONCLUSION

For all the above reasons, the applicant submits that the specification and claims are now in proper form, and that the claims all define patentably over the prior art. Therefore, the applicant submits that this application is now in condition for allowance, which action he respectfully solicits.

Conditional Request For Constructive Assistance

Applicant has made a diligent effort to amend the claims of this application so that they define novel structure, which is also unobvious. If, for any reason, the Examiner believes that the claims of this application are not yet in full condition for allowance, applicant respectfully requests his constructive assistance and suggestions pursuant to the spirit of MPEP § 2173.02 and § 707.07(j). This will enable the undersigned to place this application in fully allowable condition as soon as possible and without the need for further proceedings. The Examiner is authorized to make any needed minor corrections or changes.

Very respectfully,

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